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ABSTRACT

The question of what makes "good" literacy and numeracy provision was examined by reviewing interview data from a project on the role of vocational education and training that was conducted by the University of Tasmania's Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia. The study dataset included the findings from 541 structured interviews and 570 questionnaires that were administered to training providers, employers, organization representatives, and community members at 10 sites across Australia in 1999-2000. The following potential benefits of literacy/numeracy provision were identified: (1) improved vocational outcomes, including workplace performance; (2) greater participation in further education and better educational outcomes; (3) social integration; and (4) improved self-esteem and self-confidence. The following barriers to effective delivery were discovered: (1) lack of funding; (2) funding arrangements favoring providers who get fast results; (3) administrative barriers; (4) the policy of tying funding for literacy and numeracy to vocational outcomes; and (5) distance and isolation. The following principles of effective delivery were identified: (1) supportive and continuing structure and infrastructure, including networks promoting professional development and resource sharing; (2) targeting of training content to meet individual and community needs; (3) community ownership of programs and resources; and (4) trust and collaboration between providers and communities. (Contains 27 references.) (MN)

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**Author** John Guenther: Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia

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## Abstract

The methodological basis of this paper is a review of the interview data from an ANTA funded project conducted by the University of Tasmania's Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, here described as the 'Role of VET' project. The data from the project has been used to identify and analyse references to literacy and numeracy provision. The paper is structured to provide an analysis of the data in terms of the potential benefits of literacy and numeracy provision and the barriers to provision. It concludes with a synthesis of the principles of effective literacy and numeracy provision that are drawn from the data. The paper reports on findings from ten study sites from a cross section of regional Australia. The scope of this paper is limited to adult literacy and numeracy.

## Introduction

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The methodological basis of this paper is a review of the interview data from an ANTA funded project conducted by the University of Tasmania's Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, here described as the 'Role of Vocational Education in Australia (VET)' project. The data from the project has been used to identify and analyse references to literacy and numeracy provision.

The paper is structured to provide an analysis of the data in terms of the potential benefits of literacy and numeracy provision and the barriers to provision. It concludes with a synthesis of the principles of effective literacy and numeracy provision that are drawn from the data. The paper reports on findings from ten study sites from a cross section of regional Australia. The scope of this paper is limited to adult literacy and numeracy.

## Background

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The outcomes of this paper are based on a three year longitudinal study conducted by the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia for ANTA (CRLRA 2000, 2001a, 2001b). The study ended in 2001 with a series of ten detailed case studies and a summary report that concluded with a series of factors that contribute to the effectiveness of VET in regional Australia. Participants in the Role of VET project were stakeholders in VET, not just literacy and numeracy practitioners.

***Role of VET project***

**Description**

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The overall aim of the project was to provide detailed information about what is occurring in the field of vocational education, training and learning in Australia's regions. The project sought to throw light not only on the various ways in which VET contributes to the economic and social wellbeing of the regions, but how and why it achieves this. Full details about the project can be found at http://www.crlra.utas.edu.au.

**Sites**

The ten study sites of the Role of VET project are shown in Figure 1. The selection of sites was based on diversity that could be expected in Regional Australia. Criteria for site selection included rurality and remoteness, industry base, cultural diversity and population change.

Figure 1 - Role of VET study sites

**Sample characteristics**

The project involved completion of a 541 structured interviews and 570 questionnaires. The findings of this paper reflect the diversity of the interviewees shown in Table 1.

| Questionnaires | 1999 | 2000 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Training provider | 78 | 42 | 120 |
| Employer | 58 | 41 | 99 |
| Organisation representative | 69 | 34 | 103 |
| Community member | 174 | 62 | 236 |
| Not recorded | 12 | | 12 |
| Total | 391 | 179 | 570 |

Table 1 - Profile of respondents for questionnaire

***Statistics and literature***

**Regional disadvantage**

The educational disadvantages faced by rural and regional are well documented and well supported by statistics (ABS 1997, 1998; Bureau of Rural Sciences / Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Australia 1999). Norton (1997), commenting on the Survey of Aspects of Literacy (ABS 1997) noted that even given the exclusion of remote participants from the sample, the 'proportion of Level 1 and 2 people was higher outside the capital cities than in the capital cities'. An example of this kind of disadvantage is shown in Figure 2, which shows that rural students tend to leave school earlier than non-rural students. This pattern of disadvantage is repeated on a range of measures (Wyn et al 2001).

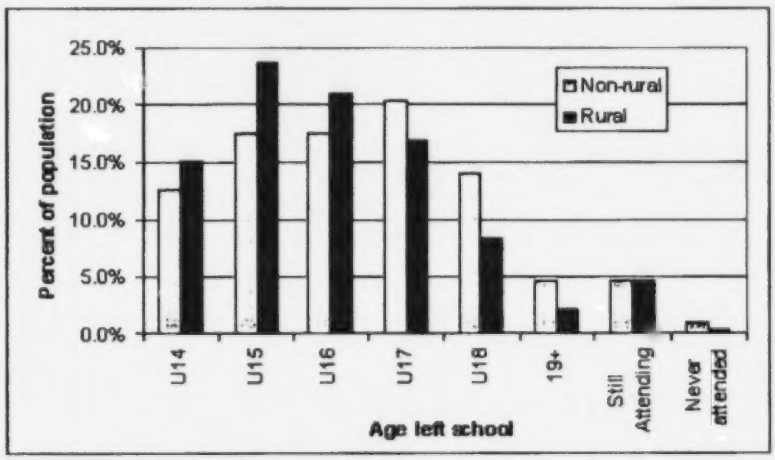


Figure 2 - Age Left School: Rural/Non-rural (Source: ABS 2001)

**Benefits and outcomes**

Current strategic direction of literacy and numeracy provision is heavily weighted toward education and employment outcomes. It is claimed that literacy and numeracy provision contributes to these outcomes (Lee & Miller 2000, Doyle et al 2000) but it is also true that social, personal and long term benefits accrue from participation in training programs (CRLRA 2001b). Falk, Balatti and Golding (2001) argue that "social connectedness comes first; socioeconomic benefits follow". The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) showed that, apart from direct economic benefits attributable to higher statistical literacy and numeracy levels, 'there are other direct and indirect returns for societies. There are relationships between high literacy, greater social cohesion and better health' (OECD 2000) and reduced economic inequality (OECD 2001b), but not necessarily causal ones.

**Barriers to effectiveness**

A range of barriers to effective training delivery, apart from the barriers of isolation and remoteness described earlier, have been identified. Quality considerations, particularly in terms of the educational value of training, have been noted by Schofield (1999a, 199b) and Smith (2000). Among these are concerns about professional development of literacy practitioners (ALNARC 2001).

**What makes delivery effective?**

Effectiveness of delivery depends to a large extent on the context in which it is delivered. There is no

one model for effective literacy and numeracy delivery. Several case studies exist that show different models of effective delivery (eg ALNARC 2000a, 2002, Falk, Balatti & Golding 2001). Foundational to effectiveness is an understanding of the changing demands that society brings in terms of literacies. It is evident that 'being a child, being an adolescent and, indeed, becoming literate have changed in some fundamental ways' (Queensland Government 2000). Contrary to popular opinion, which it could be argued has driven federal government literacy policy in schools with an emphasis on literacy (DETYA 1998), literacies are not learned at school once and for all.

> While schooling provides an essential foundation, the evidence suggests that only through informal learning and the active use of literacy skills in daily activities – both at home and work – will higher levels of proficiency be obtained. (OECD 2000, p xiv)

Research suggests that literacies are learned as part of a lifelong process (ALNARC 2000b, ACAL 2001) and are affected by a range of social, family and economic factors (OECD 2001a). Rather than viewing successful literacy and numeracy delivery in terms of purely educational or vocational outcomes, effectiveness can be viewed in terms of its impact on social well-being (OECD 2001b). It could therefore be argued that effectiveness of literacy and numeracy programs is dependent as much on the relationships that are formed through the process of learning (Balatti 2001) as it does on the quantity and quality of the resources that are applied to the students.

## Potential Beneficial Outcomes of Literacy and Numeracy Programs Identified in Regional Communities

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The data suggests that the potential benefits of literacy and numeracy provision cover a range of employment, social and personal outcomes. This section outlines these benefits with some references to interview transcripts. The examples cited in this section in themselves are not proof of the benefits listed, but do at least indicate that the link between literacy and numeracy and the outcomes is possible.

### *Employment*

In most of the study sites funding and curriculum for literacy and numeracy provision was tied to vocational outcomes. Funding for literacy and numeracy provided through WELL and LANT programs falls into this category. It could also be expected that literacy and numeracy provided within the context of Training Packages is aimed primarily at vocational outcomes.

The data reveals several ways in which literacy and numeracy training enhances participants' workplace performance. Improvements that were described included improved communication, participation in meetings, decreased OH&S risks and improved productivity. The benefits accrued not only to the organisation but to the individual as illustrated by this training provider:

> ...we had a young fellow returned to us and we put him in for training for spare parts assistant, in truck and tractors... he had very good maths skills, reading skills but his writing and spelling skills were atrocious and so we put him in through about a 12 weeks literacy course at TAFE... by the end of that course... the people could read his orders... and he ended up becoming the manager of their spare parts division.

The benefits to the organisation extend beyond the expected communication outcomes. A council representative described the benefits in terms of relational outcomes:

> I think it enhances the loyalty to the organisation and the commitment there and has improved the motivation of the staff as well in that we are interested in them as

individuals and their development...

Not only does literacy and numeracy training improve workplace performance, it also increases the statistical probability that a person will become employed. Many respondents commented on the way that a lack of literacy and numeracy skills reduced likelihood of employment. A comment from an agricultural industry employer was typical of this view:

> If they haven't got any literacy training or literacy skills, it just makes it a bit more difficult, it's not impossible you can still get a job in food and fibre out there picking and pruning and doing some physical semi skilled work shall we say... but that's probably where you would stay then and if the person doesn't want to go any further, if they do they're going to have to get literacy skills.

The findings of several potential employment related benefits are not surprising given the vocational emphasis of many of the federally funded programs. While education is part of the VET acronym, the outcomes that are described in the following section appear to be more indirect than the vocational ones.

***Education***

The data suggests that provision of literacy and numeracy training can lead to educational outcomes, which include further education within VET and tertiary systems.

A key factor that contributes to adult learners being able to continue on to higher education is the support they receive with literacy and numeracy (see availability of one to one support). The data suggests that higher educational outcomes are made possible partly as a result of this support. A training provider confirmed this view:

> I suppose the educational outcomes for students which have on the whole been positive. We've had some very good results with students who we supported through programs that have gone from certificate level and then completed a diploma course. They have made it very clear that they would have dropped out very early in the certificate without ever achieving further without learning support help...

While the data does support a view that educational benefits may follow from participation in literacy and numeracy programs, it is arguable that the impetus for personal academic achievement does not derive from the educational content of the programs but from the improved self-motivation and self-confidence that comes out of participation. Social outcomes described in the next section may also derive from similar sources.

***Social integration***

While many literacy and numeracy programs are driven by vocational needs, the Role of VET data suggests that literacy and numeracy produces positive social outcomes for participants. For example, migrants who participate in literacy and numeracy programs are not only more likely to achieve employment outcomes, they are also more likely to be able to engage in civic life. Similarly those who are detained in correctional institutions also benefit from literacy and numeracy training. A representative from a high security correctional facility described the importance of literacy and numeracy both as a stand alone program, as well as being integrated into VET programs:

> So literacy has been part of [VET] programs but in practice we nearly always operate the literacy hours independent of the vocational program itself... It's by far the most important skill requirement in the Corrections environment.

The reason for the improved social engagement appears to be related at least in part to aspects of personal development that appear to be another spin-off resulting from participation in literacy and numeracy programs.

***Personal development***

Improved self esteem and self-confidence are commonly reported outcomes of literacy and numeracy training in the Role of VET data. These outcomes are not dependent on the particular program under which literacy and numeracy is delivered. For example, programs delivered as a part of an employment program are just as likely to produce personal development outcomes as migrant programs or community based training. A rural training provider commented on the outcomes of literacy and numeracy training within his organisation:

> Well it has given them self-confidence and self-awareness that they didn't have before. ... it has given them self-worth... where they haven't had it before. And it has opened up doors, that they can do everyday jobs that they had to rely on other people before to do it. So that has been really good.

This section has summarised the potential benefits of participation in literacy and numeracy programs in terms of the employment, education, social and personal outcomes that may ensue. While the data suggests that these positive outcomes are possible, they are to some extent dependent on other factors, such as barriers to effective delivery, which are described below.

## Barriers to Effective Delivery

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The Role of VET data showed that effective literacy and numeracy delivery is hindered to some extent by a range of issues. These can be summarised in terms of funding, quality consideration, administration and the way that provision of literacy and numeracy is often tied to vocational outcomes. It should be noted that while the data comes from regional Australia, some of these barriers may well apply to metropolitan areas of Australia as well.

***Funding***

The level of funding, not surprisingly, was a common theme throughout the interview data – for all types of programs. Some communities seemed to be able to overcome this barrier – others were seemingly unable to. The lack of funding is clearly a factor that affects the ability of a community to access appropriate literacy and numeracy training.

The basis of funding was also raised as an issue for some literacy and numeracy training providers. Some providers expressed concern about the increasing expectation that funding for some programs was based on quantifiable outcomes. A migrant resource training provider expressed her concern:

> Another thing which concerns me in the future is I think we are going to go more towards outcome based funding which scares me because LANT [Language and Numeracy Training] was the beginning of that and it is very difficult to quantify some people's outcomes. For example in LANT an oral outcome is not a payable one so if someone goes up one level on their NRS [National Reporting System] in oracy we don't get paid on that basis.

While funding and basis of funding were raised as a concern by respondents, it is evident that to some extent funding and quality of deliver, discussed in the next section, go hand in hand.

***Quality considerations***

Funding arrangements favour providers who get fast results. In other words it is in a provider's financial interest to limit the time required for delivery of a service. It is apparent from the Role of VET case studies that this is one factor that means that educational value of training is compromised. A number of other quality issues follow on from this and are found in the data. These include issues of competition, professional development, access to networks and resources and quality management systems.

***Administration***

Many respondents referred to administrative barriers of training programs. Not only were the programs themselves often difficult to administer, but the threat of changes in government, with corresponding changes in policy, were a source of some concern. The response of one regional training provider was not atypical:

> I think if there is a change in government the LANT program will be overhauled and that program has been constantly mutating ever since it began. For us it is not a successful program because basically of the mutual obligation aspect of it... It is a very cumbersome program to administrate, to track students hours and yet the NRS is the tool that they are using is a nightmare.

Structural constraints of programs also mean that in some cases, literacy and numeracy trainees are slotted into a program that really is not suitable for them. The same provider illustrated this in terms of youth:

> What we were finding [that] some of the schools were actually sending their behavioural problem kids to us... The way the schools are operating certainly has an impact on our programs because we are ending up with the kids who are eighteen or twenty or whatever and supposedly have done Year 10 but can barely read and write so it is quite sad that schools are leaving these kids [to] slip through.

Administrative barriers are in some way related to the way that literacy and numeracy provision is tied to vocational outcomes. It is evident that there is often a tension between meeting the needs of clients or trainees and fitting their training into a vocationally based program.

***L&N tied to vocational outcomes***

One of the concerns commonly raised by respondents in the interviews (particular literacy and numeracy training providers) was the way that to receive public funding literacy and numeracy provision was increasingly linked to vocational outcomes. This doesn't appear to affect those who are involved with some kind of workplace training, such as a training package or a LANT program, but it does appear to act as a barrier to access for those who need literacy and numeracy skills but do not require vocational outcomes. Those affected are older Australians, Indigenous people in CDEP programs and others who may be employed but who for some reason cannot gain access to a workplace related program. A CDEP coordinator expressed his concern this way:

> Before 1998 we were forever running courses here; literacy, numeracy and job skills and like post-98, the government just changed the whole system and now they are putting in barriers that are making it much more difficult to obtain training and the work for [CDEP

project].

One of the problems associated with tying literacy and numeracy training to vocational outcomes is that those who are unemployed or unemployable either do not have the same access to training, or if they do manage to slot into a vocationally oriented course, the emphasis is on achieving work related skills. While this sounds fine, it is likely that at a prevocational level, long term unemployed require a different set of literacy and numeracy skills aimed at building their self-esteem and confidence communicating at a variety of levels.

These restrictions meant that some training providers, trying to meet the needs of their clients, found themselves pushing the boundaries of accredited training. A rural training provider described this dilemma:

> If we can find some training dollars as in there are often moneys available for specific projects, that sort of thing, so you have a look around and see if there's some money for indigenous people, if that's what the client group was, if there was some literacy and numeracy or whatever sort of funding available. It's how you supplement the income, to have accredited training. ...it has to always be accredited training as in a training package or system, course or module whichever you are involved in.

The issues associated with quality, administration and linkages to VET outcomes are made worse by the influence of distance and isolation.

***Distance and isolation***

The Role of VET project found that despite increases in uptake of New Technology, in many parts of rural and regional Australia the quality of Information Technology infrastructure and the understanding of its application were lacking. For those needing literacy and numeracy skills, access to online resources that might be available is exacerbated by their low reading skills and low computer literacy skills. This view is confirmed by comments such as this from a rural training provider:

> Half of remote Australia...wouldn't feel comfortable learning on the Internet - their wife does get on the Internet

This leaves those needing literacy and numeracy training with more traditional methods of delivery. It is clear that the more remote a community is the more costly it is to provide services. While the needs are just as great in remote communities, they are not being addressed, as this rural trainer suggests:

> [Community needs are not met] in remote areas, because its too expensive to address them.

While volunteer tutors to some extent may fill the gaps, coordinators must still be able to support them, and for most coordinators the financial resources are not available to provide professional development for these volunteers.

## Principles of Effective Delivery

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The discussion so far has focussed on the potential outcomes of and barriers to effective literacy and numeracy delivery. The following section pulls together the common threads of effective delivery, checked against the barriers, with a series of principles that are highlighted by short vignettes that provide illustrations of ways that these principles can be put into practice. Delivery is more effective when:

1. there is a supportive and continuing structure and infrastructure,
2. content of training is targeted to meet individual and community needs,
3. there is community ownership of programs and resources and
4. there is trust and collaboration between providers and communities.

The findings are drawn from rural and regional Australia and reflect the situation in the ten sites used for the Role of VET project. While the principles may apply more generally to rural and regional Australia, and possibly metropolitan Australia, it should be noted that the data has not been tested to determine its application in the general sense.

***Supportive and continuing structures and infrastructure***

While structures under which literacy and numeracy provision are delivered vary considerable from place to place a number of factors contribute to their ongoing success. The structure must be built to assure quality, it should be adequately resources in terms of funds and infrastructure. Networks that promote professional development and resource sharing are also important for effectiveness.

**Structures that assure quality delivery**

The Role of VET data did not reveal a particular 'model' that was more suitable than another in regional Australia but there were elements in common across the sites that appeared to contribute to better outcomes. These common elements are referred to here as 'principles'. One of the common factors that contributed to effectiveness was the presence of an organisational structure that assured quality of delivery. Figure 3 shows the elements that tend to be common to the structure. Within the structure the training provider is generally a well established organisation that is trusted within the community. The coordinator is generally and experienced and qualified practitioner with a history in the community who draws on networks with external organisations to attract referrals. In many cases the coordinator works with a group of volunteer tutors to provide training to learners. While there may be some variation in the form of this structure, these elements appear in most of the effective models of delivery covered by the Role of VET data. In most cases the structure, while undergoing incremental changes to meet the needs of the community and to satisfy changes to policy, program and funding, belongs to the community and has a long history in the community.

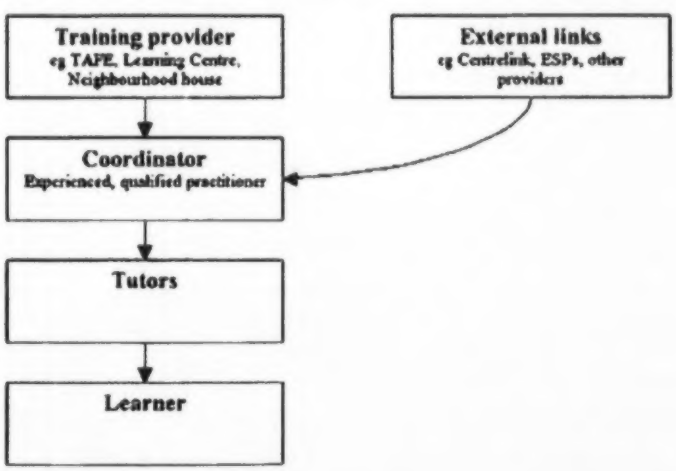




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Figure 3 - Structures that assure quality

The following illustration highlights one way this structure could be manifest.

**Illustration 1 - Plainsville: Community College structure assures quality**
Literacy and numeracy training in Plainsville is provided through the local Community College. The college was originally only a training provider but later became a Job Network provider. Quality is assured in this system through the experience and standard of the trainers and the professional standing of the umbrella organisation. Because the umbrella organisation is an employment service provider the linkages that would normally generate referrals are effectively internal. The structure in this case does not depend on volunteer tutors.

**Resources**
To some extent the level of resources is related to the level of funding provided to a region. However, to some extent a community has control over its own infrastructure and through the development of cooperative partnerships it is possible for small regional communities to overcome some of the limitations of resources. The following illustration provides an example of one way that a relatively isolated community responds to resource issues.

**Illustration 2 - Western City: ACE Centre acts as a shared community resource**
In Western City the ACE Centre is an educational facility used by several organisations. It is used by community groups, ACE providers and a regional university. This resource provides the city with a valuable educational asset. A key to the success of the facility is the cooperation that exists between the education and training providers of the community.

**Adequate funding**
While funding in remote and isolated areas is often inadequate to meet the training needs of a particular community, the Role of VET project demonstrated that there are some things that communities can do to attract funding for projects. The project found that this will happen when there are high levels of trust present in the community and when this combines with high levels of cooperation and collaboration. The following illustrations show contrasting examples:

**Illustration 3 - Western City: Collaborative partnerships to attract funding**
The Western City site provided several examples of ways that a community with shrinking population could attract funding. A key to the success of this site was the way in which training providers and community groups collaborated with each other to ensure that limited resources were shared. Another reason for this site's success was the extent to which it drew on external resources and networks.

**Illustration 4 – Woodville: Community divisions inhibit ability to attract funding**
The Woodville site was characterised by social divisions between those who were pro-development and conservation oriented and between pro-forestry and environmentally concerned groups. These divisions prevented levels of cooperation at a community level, inhibited resource sharing and as a result restricted access to funding for targeted training programs (including literacy and numeracy).

**L&N networks**
Internal and external networks between providers and tutors facilitate sharing of knowledge and experience that in turn improve the quality of training provision. A literacy and numeracy tutor's response about the benefits of these networks illustrates the point:

> Well we've sort of made a club out of the literacy tutors, we've all got together and we get together monthly and share ideas and strategies and plans and those sorts of things

> and the TAFE in [City] has gathered us together and they've given us a lot of support and help, everything you need we are finding at the [regional] TAFE.

The networks can be either informal or formal in nature. The benefits accrue from the introduction of new ideas that feed into strategies for delivery.

***Content targeted at individual and community needs***

Successful delivery is dependent on the extent to which the training is meaningful to the learner. Often it seems that meaning is bet built into programs when individual needs are taken into account. This may be expressed though the provision of one to one support, through training that is relevant to real life situations and through resources that are customised for an individual or small group.

**Availability of one to one support**
For many adult learners, particularly those with literacy and numeracy difficulties, re-entry into a study environment is daunting. Evidence from the data here suggests that one way of reducing the 'fear' associated with re-entry is to provide one to one support. The effectiveness of one to one support is highlighted by a training provider working with migrants:

> I: ...Do you have small classes?
> R: No. It was set up originally 12 months ago that in one group I have a Russian, a Yugoslav, a Japanese, a PNG whatever and they all have a different perspective on English and therefore the only successful way for me to train is one on one.

**Relevance to real life**
While the Role of VET data does not specifically suggest that the "built-in" (ANTA 2000) approach is effective, it does suggest that where literacy and numeracy training is a part of, or integrated into, every day life – whether that be paid work, voluntary work or life in the local community – then it is more effective. A rural town's training provider working with Indigenous people explained:

> ...it sounds good running literacy programs but from experience I've found that people don't come, they don't have a commitment [to] literacy programs as a stand alone thing, so I think they have more success being integrated into other training courses making them relevant to what they're doing at the time.

A training provider from a regional city described this relevance to real life in terms of it being meaningful.

> [A trainee] came up to me at the end of one day and he said, 'You know I have learnt more maths in this day than I have learnt in all my schooling.' Now you get kids like that, it is partly readiness. It is partly relevance... It is meaningful for them...

**Customised resources**
Training Packages often provide a useful framework within which to provide literacy and numeracy. In many cases the way that training resources support the competencies required by the elements of units within a Training Package makes a significant difference to the extent to which literacy and numeracy outcomes are achieved. Customisation of resources at this level often requires direct input of training staff. In some cases this customisation is done by teaching staff 'on the fly' as this TAFE representative from a regional city suggests:

> I can feel the pressure that a lot of our students perhaps don't have the literacy skills or

> the reading skills to deal with the content of modules so [teachers] are constantly reworking things and rephrasing things to meet the needs of the students and that is on an informal basis... The teachers are taking the modules, looking at their students, listening to other people and making changes as they go along.

As this respondent suggests, the training staff need to be sensitive to individuals' needs.

***Community ownership***

Community ownership can be expressed in a variety of ways including local involvement or management of training provision. It may also find an expression through a group of committed volunteer tutors. The learning culture of a community is perhaps an indicator of the likely success of a training initiative but it will be shown that training providers can act to promote a positive learning culture.

**Local involvement or management**

Evidence from the Role of VET project suggests that local involvement or management of programs is an important factor that contributes to the programs' success. The form that this involvement took depended on the context of the particular site. In some cases programs are community driven while in others the initiative comes from outside the community and development of programs is achieved through community consultation. The following illustration highlights the former approach:

**Illustration 5 – Takanni: A Community managed organisation integrates a range of services.**

Takanni is a small rural community in an area of rural Australia. The success of literacy and numeracy programs there is attributed to the way in which a community managed organisation integrates Centrelink, a New Apprenticeship Centre, literacy and numeracy programs and employment services. The community managed organisation has fairly wide representation from within the community and has built a high level of trust within the community.

**Tutors**

Tutors are an important part of many community-based literacy and numeracy programs. Many if not most of the tutors are volunteers, and while this is in itself an issue, the mode of interface between learner and tutor is the issue rather than the nature of their tenure. The tutors allow training to extend well beyond what would be provided for by paid staff. The Role of VET data suggests that being a volunteer tutor is as much about being part of a social network as it is about providing a community service. The two purposes appear to be complimentary.

**Illustration 6 - Woodville: Volunteers extend the reacy of literacy and numeracy programs**

The Woodville Community House is a voluntary organisation that provides many community-based services. It is the base for local adult literacy support services. The literacy support services with its 15 volunteers are coordinated by a part time worker. Apart from the support provided by the volunteers the success of the programs can be attributed to the way they are integrated as part of a broader community resource.

**Learning culture**

It is evident that the learning resources that an individual brings to their training makes a difference to the effectiveness of the training provided. Where trainees come from a background where lifelong learning is an expected part of life training, including literacy and numeracy provision is more likely to succeed. In part, the learning culture is determined by a history of available training provision in a region. In part it is determined by the prevailing culture of the local community. Two examples from the Role of VET project serve to illustrate this point:

**Illustration 7 - Rivertown: Problems for a remote region with a poor learning culture**
At the Kerang site, which included a geographical slice across the NSW border, the more remote regions within NSW appeared to suffer from a poor learning culture, which affected the propensity of community members to participate in training. This comment by an unemployed youth from Rivertown illustrates this:

> I: If someone was to say to you well why don't you go back to school or why don't you move what would you say?
> R: Well I like [Rivertown], so I don't think I'd want to move from here, it's a nice community, a nice people in it, very small very close knit you know and I don't think I want to go back to school because I was in year 12 I did about a month of year 12 and you know I sort of decided you know well this isn't me.

**Illustration 8 – Flowertown: Training providers instrumental in promoting a positive learning culture**
Flowertown is a remote town with a population of about 200. While relatively remote, the learning culture of this community was enhanced by the collaborative efforts of the local school and the networks established with external training providers, which meant that opportunities for learning were not limited by the remote nature of the community.

It is likely that a poor learning culture is more of a problem in remote parts of Australia than in urban centres because of the lack of infrastructure and physical resources. However, as Illustration 8 suggests, these problems can at least in part be overcome by an education and training sector that encourages cooperation and collaboration both within and outside the community.

***Trust and collaboration between providers and communities***

The relationship between providers and between providers and the communities they operate in is an important factor contributing to the effectiveness of training programs generally. Community here is taken as a geographically bounded place where people live. It is recognised that within a particular location, peoples' concept of what it means to be 'community' differs.

**Cultural sensitivity**
There are some regions within rural and remote Australia where there is a high level of cultural diversity. For example in one rural site of the Role of VET project there was a high proportion of Indigenous people. In another site based around a regional city there were large numbers of immigrants. In order to be effective, training programs need to take into account the cultural needs of these diverse communities. There are several ways that these cultural needs can be taken into consideration. The following illustration highlights one way this can be achieved.

**Illustration 9 - Brolgaville: Cultural awareness programs for both trainers and Indigenous communities**
In Brolgaville, the regional university is responsible for delivering VET and tertiary programs. It offers training on campus and to remote communities. Trainers who engage with Indigenous communities are required to participate in a cultural orientation program. Communities are also encouraged to participate in a similar program. A university representative explained:

> We like to run a cultural awareness program in the communities for the indigenous people to understand why we work the way we do. It's a two-way thing. If they don't understand where we are coming from, there is no hope in hell.

**Community engagement**
Building trust to enable the kind of collaboration required to improve effectiveness of training

provision requires that providers have an ongoing involvement in the community. Several training providers in the Role of VET interviews spoke of the importance of engagement in the community. In some cases this meant involvement in a number of voluntary organisations in the community. In other cases it meant belonging to a networking organisation that forged links within the community. It was also apparent that trust was dependent on a longstanding involvement in the community.

**Western City: Trust leads to collaborative partnerships**
When Western City's future was threatened with the inevitable collapse of the mining industry in the town, a number of community groups got together to find ways of building community sustainability. Training providers, many of whom were involved in other community groups, played an integral part in the process by forming their own network to examine ways in which education might play a role in revitalising the ailing community. Over time the trust the developed among the community networks resulted in a number of collaborative partnerships, which to a large extent have ameliorated the losses caused by the mine's closure.

## Conclusions

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This paper is not designed to provide an exhaustive analysis of all the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of literacy and numeracy provision in regional and rural Australia. It does however draw on and analyse an extensive body of research data from regional Australia to show the benefits of, barriers to, and principles of effective delivery. While the data used drew on interviews conducted in ten diverse regional sites, it is possible that the principles of effectiveness identified apply more generically.

The Role of VET data used for this paper clearly shows that the potential benefits of participation on literacy and numeracy programs include possible vocational, education, social and personal outcomes. A number of barriers to effective delivery were identified. Funding, quality assurance considerations, administrative problems, isolation and structural issues relating to the integration of literacy and numeracy into VET were identified.
Analysis of the Role of VET data revealed a number of generic principles that could be considered to contribute to the effectiveness of literacy and numeracy provision in regional Australia. It should be noted that these principles are not necessarily exhaustive, have not been tested wider than the ten sites and can only be selectively applied depending on the context of training delivery.

**Principle #1 – Outcomes of training are enhanced with the presence of supportive and continuing structures.**
It was found that delivery was considered effective when the structures of delivery assured quality, when there were adequate resources and funding applied to the training and where there was a fruitful exchange of information and resources through either formal or informal literacy and numeracy networks.

**Principle #2 – Effectiveness of delivery is improved when content is targeted to meet individual and community needs.**
Effectiveness was enhanced in situations where there was access to one to one support for trainees, where the content was relevant to their day to day work or social life and where resources were customised to meet individual needs.

**Principle #3 – Community ownership results in effective resource use and higher participation rates.**
Local involvement and a learning culture that encouraged participation in lifelong learning were identified as factors that contribute to effectiveness. In some cases volunteer tutors facilitated social and educational links that extended the reach of training.

**Principle #4 – Trust and collaboration between providers and communities underpins**

**successful programs**
The fourth principle underpins all the others and relates to trust and collaboration between providers and communities. Trust is built in a community over time and is expressed through sensitivity to cultural diversity and through active and ongoing engagement by training providers in the community.

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**Close Paper**

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